



John McCoy

Reports from the Capital

State Representative
38th Legislative District

Committees:
Higher Education
Trade & Economic Development
Commerce & Labor

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Spring 2004

Dear Neighbor:

I am pleased to share this report on the 2004 Legislative Session.

As always, let me emphasize that it is a great honor to serve Snohomish County. It means a lot to me to represent you and other citizens who make a home in our Everett, Marysville, and Tulalip communities.

Please know that I appreciate the time many of you take to contact me. Your comments help me do a better job representing our 38th District! We will not always agree on things, but I promise I will always respect your opinion.

Lindsay Bull is my legislative assistant. Lindsay and I want to know your opinions about the Legislature, about state government, or about anything else that is on your mind.

All the best,

John McCoy
State Representative
38th Legislative District

Economy: Searching for policies that help build *and* keep reliable, good-paying jobs

In my opinion, government should work with the business community. It should be a partner with — not an adversary of! — the small, medium and large companies that keep Washington men and women on the job. A government's mission is to write sound public policy that promotes good job-growth and protects our quality of life. And then to a very great extent, government should stay out of the way.

Washington's economy has been in a three-year skid that only just lately shows signs of recovery. No doubt, the Legislature came into session this year with a more profound than ever responsibility to create jobs.

Just over a month after the opening gavel, we approved legislation to provide tax incentives for research-and-development work in high-tech industries. The governor signed the legislation not long after it reached his desk.

I hasten to add that this economic-development package underscores accountability. These tax incentives are meant to help businesses put down more names on their employment rolls — not simply to help businesses put up more attractive profit margins.

The Evergreen State has a mission to keep its world-class position as home to cutting-edge technology. That's why we adopted tax exemptions for firms involved in the construction of research-and-development facilities — as well as research-and-development projects in the universities.

**The
2004
Session**

A pair of other job-building measures that passed the House of Representatives, however, didn't fare so well with our friends over in the Senate.

One of these proposals would have bolstered the use of apprentices. We wanted to develop the next generation of highly skilled workers – and at the same time provide more good-paying careers for our citizens.

Another measure called for an investigation into a very controversial business practice called “offshoring.” Many hundreds of Washington-citizen jobs (not to mention many millions of Washington-taxpayer dollars) are sent to companies in other countries as a result of offshoring.

Schools: Education had better be a very significant part of any legislative agenda

Nothing else we do matters if our kids don't have top-quality teachers, professors, administrators, and classified-staff members. That's what it takes to make sure our schools, colleges and universities stay counted among the best on the planet. It's all about our students: pre-school and kindergarten kids, for sure, as well as college men and women, and all the other ages in between. What good does terrific economic-development policy do, for example, if our new businesses have to “shop” elsewhere to find qualified folks to do the jobs?

In four years, our high-school seniors will be taking a very tough new competency test in order to graduate.

A measure we passed this year directs that young people will receive four reasonable opportunities to pass this rigorous test. Yes, we want the examination to be tough. We want it to really mean something when a young person graduates from high school! But on the other hand, we don't want the test to turn into some kind of chamber of horrors.

We also passed a bill aimed at helping districts collect the full amount of levies that have been approved by a big majority of their local voters. And what about schools whose students demonstrate *improvements*? Will they have to face what can only be called the “Catch-22” of actually *losing* state funds that come through the Learning Assistance Program? No, not according to another well-timed bill we passed this year.

We shored up funding for levy-equalization to help smaller school districts that are relatively poor in terms of property-tax revenue. Also this year, a majority of legislators agreed to the establishment of charter schools in some communities where folks want to try something new.

Unfortunately, the Senate ***again refused to even consider*** legislation asking voters to review a state-constitutional amendment regarding levies.

Right now, as you know, districts must capture at least 60 percent of the vote to pass a levy. (Too many folks in our communities around Snohomish County know just what it means to lose a levy after earning a huge majority — but not quite huge enough! — of the votes.) The House again this year passed a bill that would ask voters if the constitution should be changed to make that requirement 50 percent (plus at least one vote). But as I noted, the Senate refused to let the voters choose.



Whether it's public or private or in the home, education is so important in preparing young people — who will soon be ruling the 21st century.

■ Higher education is higher priority

Our colleges and universities will be able to increase the number of seats available for students, according to terms of another bill this session. It's especially important that we create more opportunities in high-demand fields such as health care, biotechnology, and high-tech industries.

The Legislature authorized additional financial aid, including our state's highly successful Promise Scholarship program. **We want to help hard-working students whose families otherwise couldn't afford to send them to college.**

We began discussion on the placement of a new four-year university in Snohomish County. We're one of the nation's largest counties that isn't home to a four-year university. Our county would not only benefit tremendously from the increased access to education for our citizens, it would bring needed jobs to our region, too.

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Transportation: Keeping Snohomish County families moving safely and efficiently

The House and Senate approved legislation to accelerate some Snohomish County transportation projects. This isn't important just in terms of getting traffic flowing through the Everett corridor – although that's certainly a huge part of it. But moving people and vehicles more safely and more efficiently will also help us be prepared for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics.

I think every citizen agrees that it's vital for us to get traffic moving through Everett. The continuous traffic jam that exists is not only bad for the daily commuter stuck out on I-5, it's bad for business, too.

Ask small and large business-owners what their top priorities are toward making Washington more business-friendly. A common response is that we need to solve our state's traffic problem. People and freight need to move freely in order for businesses to succeed.

Snohomish County has an incredible opportunity to take advantage of some of the major business that our Canadian neighbors will be receiving in 2010. Vancouver has the good fortune to host the Olympics – and our own communities need to be prepared to take advantage of the business this event will bring our way.

We approved a supplemental transportation budget, which will accelerate road-construction on I-5 in Snohomish County – thus ensuring safer, more efficient commutes.

By adding a car-pool lane in each direction between the Boeing freeway and U.S. Highway 2 – plus an all-purpose lane from 41st Street Southeast to U.S. 2, major chokepoints will be cleared in our commute and access to local businesses will be improved. Completing these improvements before the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver will help strengthen our regional economy and advance our state's tourism-promotion efforts.

Health care: Basic medical coverage is key for many Washington families

Providing quality, affordable health care — especially when children are part of the equation — is a such a key in keeping any family above water.

The supplemental budget we passed this year eliminates premiums for many children in the Medicaid health-care program. If we hadn't set this new course, upward of 20,000 kids faced the loss of health coverage! This new policy involves children in families whose income is no more than

150 percent of the federal poverty level. (The federal poverty level for a family of three, as a matter of fact, is \$23,000 a year.)

Well-earned raises and health-care benefits for home-care workers — people who hold down some of our society's most important jobs — are funded in this new budget.

We also approved a bill to help small businesses buy health insurance for their employees by allowing insurance firms to develop "economy plans."

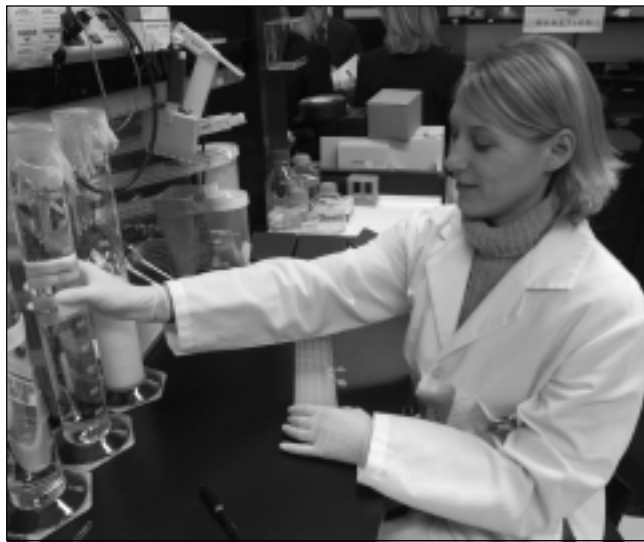
Funding is made available to help hospitals take care of patients who are uninsured or medically indigent.

Along these same lines, the supplemental budget provides more money for community clinics.

Unfortunately (yet again), the Senate rejected our House plan to lower the price of prescription drugs for hard-hit Washington families.

We wanted to make it legal for our state to buy medicine in Canada (where prescription drugs are much less expensive). But the Senate Republican leadership flatly rejected that idea in the Legislature this year.

They also thwarted House legislation to increase patient safety, get tough with physicians who have a history of malpractice, and establish policies to keep the price of malpractice insurance from going through the roof.



Quality, affordable health care is essential for Washington people – especially our youngest citizens whose families have been stung most painfully by the three-year recession.

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**Get involved! Please
attend a Town Hall — and
tell me what's on *your* mind**

*I always look forward to hearing what my fellow citizens
are thinking – it helps me do a better job representing our
neighborhoods and communities!*

Town Hall meetings are a great way for you to get your points across. Tell me your thoughts about what we did in the 2004 session, what you'd like us to do in the 2005 session, or whatever else is on your mind!

Saturday, May 15

10 a.m.

Everett Senior Activity Center
3025 Lombard Avenue
Everett

Tuesday, May 18

6 p.m.

Marysville City Hall
1049 State Avenue
Marysville



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